DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 312 668 CS 212 161

AUTHOR Sperling, Melanie
TITLE I Want To Talk to Each of You: Collaboration and the Teacher-Student Writing Conference. Technical Report No. 37.
INSTITUTION Center for the Study of Writing, Berkeley, CA.; Center for the Study of Writing, Pittsburgh, PA.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Oct 89
NOTE 63p.; Student papers in the appendices may not reproduce well due to broken type.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Context Clues; *Discourse Analysis; Grade 9; Junior High Schools; Student Writing Models; *Teacher Student Relationship; Writing (Composition); *Writing Evaluation; *Writing Processes; Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS Collaborative Writing; *Teacher Student Conferences; *Writing Conferences; Writing Development

ABSTRACT

This study examined the teaching and learning of writing for secondary school students as it occurred in the interactive context of teacher-student writing conferences in the form of private teacher-student conversations about the students' writing or writing process. Following ethnographic procedures, the study examined naturally occurring conferences in a ninth-grade English class for six case study students. Covering an observation period of 6 weeks, collected data included audio and video tapes of conference talk, audio and video tapes of all other class activities, observational field notes, interviews with the teacher and focal students, and all drafts of focal student writing. A descriptive quantitative discourse analysis of conference talk across students and descriptive qualitative case study analyses for each of the six students showed the writing conference to occasion a kind of teacher-student collaboration in which the teacher assumed a special leadership role. Collaboration was seen as a shifting process shaped not only by conference participants but by the rhetorical circumstances of their talk; and collaboration was described along a continuum, varying both across students and with each student at different times. (Six tables of data are included; 47 references and 4 appendixes containing samples of coded conversation and student papers are attached.) (Author/KEH)

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Center for the Study of Writing

Technical Report No. 37

I WANT TO TALK TO EACH OF YOU: COLLABORATION AND THE TEACHER-STUDENT WRITING CONFERENCE

Melanie Sperling

October, 1989

University of California, Berkeley
Carnegie Mellon University

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To appear in *Research in the Teaching of English.*

University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

The project presented, or reported herein, was performed pursuant to a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement/Department of Education (OERI/ED) for the Center for the Study of Writing. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the OERI/ED and no official endorsement by the OERI/ED should be inferred.

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Abstract

This study examines the teaching and learning of writing for secondary school students as it occurs in the interactive context of teacher-student writing conferences—that is, private teacher-student conversations about the students' writing or writing process. Following ethnographic procedures, the study examines naturally-occurring conferences in a ninth-grade English class for six case study students. Covering an observation period of six weeks, collected data include audio and video tapes of conference talk, audio and video tapes of all other class activities, observational field notes, interviews with teacher and focal students, and all drafts of focal student writing. A descriptive quantitative discourse analysis of conference talk across students and descriptive qualitative case study analyses within students show the writing conference to occasion a kind of teacher-student collaboration in which the teacher assumes a special leadership role; collaboration is seen as a shifting process shaped not only by conference participants but by the rhetorical circumstances of their talk; and collaboration is described along a continuum, varying both across students and within students at different times.

Author's Note

Funding for this project was provided through a grant by the National Council of Teachers of English. Funding for data collection was provided through a grant to S.W. Freedman by the National Institute of Education.

I wish to thank Sarah Warshauer Freedman for her invaluable help throughout this study and throughout the preparation of this manuscript. This study also benefitted from the much appreciated help of Paul Ammon, Jenny Cook-Gumperz, John Gumperz, and Mark Wilson. Finally, I wish to thank Sheridan Blau, Jim Hahn, Carol Heller, Marvin Silverman, and two anonymous reviewers for their sensitive readings of earlier drafts of this manuscript.

I WANT TO TALK TO EACH OF YOU: COLLABORATION AND THE TEACHER-STUDENT WRITING CONFERENCE

by

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Misa is having a conference with her ninth-grade English teacher about the essay she is writing, a character study of her friend Winifred. Part of the assignment for writing this character study is to capture the "real Winifred," no small task for a ninth grader:

Teacher: Well.[1]
So she's very serious uh—

Misa: She looks' serious.

T: Yeah.
She looks' serious,
and on the surface she acts' serious if she's doing important stuff.
Right?
[
M: Uh huh.
. . .
She gets her homework done.
I mean I ask her,
Oh are you finished?
Yes I am,
I went- wow'.
(laughs)

---

[1]Transcription conventions:

Each transcribed line of talk represents an "intonation unit," that is, a segment of speech "spoken with a single, coherent intonation contour . . . followed by a pause" (see Chafe, 1987, p. 10).

Falling intonation	. at end of line
Rising intonation	, at end of line
Question intonation	? at end of line
Emphatic stress	' on stressed syllable
Overlapping speech	[
Latched speech (i.e, no perceptible pause between speaker turns)	=
Long perceptible pause	. . .
Short perceptible pause	. .
Backchannels (i.e., listener's vocal monitoring of speaker's talk)	/between slashes/
Short or jerky syllable	-
Elongated syllable	—
Tape was unclear	(uc)
Editorial ellipses	[. . .]

T: Ok.=

M: =That's right.
We have mostly all our classes together.

T: Uh huh.
But.
Then she has this other quality of uh-,=

M: =She has a sense of humor.
/umhm/
That's right.
If you didn't know Winifred,
if you just watch her,
you'd think she's real serious.

The conference from which the above is excerpted continues for a little over three minutes. It takes place at the back of the classroom where the teacher has set up two chairs. It ends like this:

T: Ok.
So you're gonna write about the way she appeared-
The main thing is you gotta write about somehow the way she appears',
Let's say to me,
as teacher,

M: Uh huh.

T: and the way she is when you're with her.

M: Yeah,
like when we're with friends,
/umhm/
and stuff like that.

The conference over, the teacher and Misa get up, simultaneously, from the two chairs.

Such conversations are rare in ninth-grade English classes, rare, for that matter, at any level of secondary school, where writing instruction tends either to follow a tradition-bound teacher-centered paradigm that admits little in the way of focused teacher-student interaction (see, e.g., Applebee, 1981, 1984; Langer, 1984), or where, albeit with less traditional leanings, teachers find little time for such conversations to occur (Freedman et al., 1987). It is as if classroom practice, deliberately or no, often supports a romantic belief that writing is a solitary activity. Yet much of the work in writing research of the past decade or so has been devoted to unseating this belief (see Bruffee, 1986, for a critical overview of both cognitive and literary approaches to writing that take as their premise that writing is an "individual act"). We are coming to know, too, that learning to write—which is to say, acquiring and developing written language—is, as is learning to speak, a fundamentally social activity, embedded in interactions with teachers and others (see, e.g, Cazden, 1982), such as the interaction illustrated in the above conversation between Misa and her teacher.

In the project reported in this article, I examined such private teacher-student conversations, or writing conferences, as they occurred for Misa and for five of her classmates as, like the other students in their class, they talked individually to their ninth-grade English

teacher about their writing or writing processes. Following Misa, Lisa, Gina, Donald, Rhonda, and Barb every day for six weeks as they completed three major essay assignments and participated in writing conferences along the way, I focused on the content and structure of these conferences in order to understand what constitutes the teaching and learning of writing for different secondary students in an explicitly interactive context and to determine the use of such interactive methodology in fostering writing development in the context of a secondary school classroom. In this article, I show how the writing conference as a collaborative act serves students' learning as writers. That is, I show how, participating in the explicit dialogue of teacher-student conversation, students collaborate in the often implicit act of acquiring and developing written language.

THEORETICAL FRAME

This project rests in large part on the rich and growing evidence in both psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic research that learning and developing skill in language use is an intrinsically dynamic social and constructive process whereby language learning reflects the learner's internalization of verbal activities that originate in a social context (Bruner, 1978; Cazden, 1982; Cook-Gumperz, 1979; DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; Dyson & Freedman, in press; Freedman et al., 1987; Garvey, 1984; Wells, MacLure, & Montgomery, 1979). This study benefits, too, from the sociolinguistic work of classroom ethnographers who assume that teaching and learning in school are shaped by the context-bound interactions of classroom participants (e.g., Green & Wallat, 1981; Gumperz, 1982; Mehan, 1979).

Compatible with and often the foundation of this research is the theoretical base provided by the Soviet psychologists who perceive teaching and learning to be integrated parts in a dynamic social process of knowledge construction (e.g., Leont'ev, 1981; Luria, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Vygotsky's concept of a zone of proximal development ("the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers," 1978, p. 86) implies that learning is a collaborative effort which allows participants to work on a problem that at least one of them could not effectively work on alone (see Newman, Griffin, & Cole, in press). Typically, through such interaction, the child is said to "appropriate" (Leont'ev, 1981) the culture's tools—the tool of language, for example—as represented by the adult. Not incidentally, the teacher reciprocally applies the process of appropriation in interactions with the student, so that it is possible for the adult, too, to redefine a situation in a way that does not coincide with his or her original definition (see Wertsch, 1984).

Key to and underlying this study is the assumption that this interactive basis of learning and of language development encompasses the learning of written language as well as spoken language—by which we may understand that learning to write, like learning to speak, is rooted in social interaction (see, e.g., Bruffee, 1984, 1986). According to Vygotsky, thought is the internalization of such social interaction. Text, the written manifestation of thought, reflects this internalization process (see Bruffee, 1984, on the relationship of written text to dialogue). In making internalized interaction external again, the writer's text in effect extends the interaction. Thus, for a student learning to write, that text is an opportunity for the deliberate and explicit continuation of the dialogue—to be internalized again and reflected anew in newer text. It is critical to our understanding of the written language acquisition process to explore how, as partners in conversation, teacher and student may work toward constructing the student's development as a writer.

Research that has examined teacher-student writing conference conversation has generally supported the premise that such conferences enhance the writing acquisition process. For example, on the basis of Bruner's conception of teacher as "scaffold" (e.g., Bruner, 1975,

1978; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), such interaction has been observed to promote the learner's development as he or she is guided by the teacher's models of writing behavior, by the teacher's outright sharing of the writing task or problem, or by the teacher's advice or hints for writing performance (see, e.g., Applebee & Langer, 1983, on "instructional scaffolding"). The concept of the scaffold has metaphoric appeal—it brings to mind the familiar structure one sees in building construction, providing support and thereby extending the range of the worker (see Greenfield, 1984). Yet because it is the teacher who is usually seen to build a scaffold for the student the metaphor invites us to ignore the constructive, active role of the student in the learning interaction (regarding this drawback, see Cazden, 1983a, 1988): in the case of Misa's conference with her teacher, a look at Misa's input into the conversation shows it to be of no less interest than the teacher's ("communicative competence," says Bruner [1978, p. 244], "has to do with *dialogue*" [emphasis mine]). Indeed, conversation itself is an intrinsically two-sided, cooperative activity. Participants engage in taking turns in an orderly fashion, sequencing adjacent turns syntagmatically as answer follows question, acceptance follows offer, compliance follows request; participants cooperatively relate the meaning of one turn to that of the next; and they systematically relate talk to a shared context (Wells, 1981). Protean events, taking shape or form as interaction unfolds (Green & Wallat, 1981), conversations allow, too, for meanings and interpretations to be continuously negotiated between participants (Gumperz, 1982). Classroom conversations are much more highly constrained but nonetheless two-sided (Campbell, 1986; Gumperz, 1981; McDermott, 1976; Mehan, 1979).

Studies that have devoted attention to both participants' conversational input in the teacher-student writing conference show how input from both conversants affects the kinds of information about writing that different students may carry away from the dialogue (see Freedman, 1979, 1980; Freedman & Katz, 1987; Freedman & Sperling, 1985; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Walker & Elias, 1987, on the college-level writing conference; see Graves, 1983, on the elementary school writing conference; and see Florio-Ruane, 1986, and Michaels, Ulichny, & Watson-Gegeo, 1986, on unsuccessful elementary school conferences). In showing that students who contribute most to conference talk reap most benefit as long as the contributions are context-appropriate and compatible with instructional goals, these studies suggest the importance of the student's contribution to the instructional outcomes of the writing conference.

What has not been considered is the construction process whereby teacher and different students work together through their talk in light of the classroom setting in which such talk occurs. Toward this end, this study examined, in depth, the ninth-grade teacher-student writing conferences between a highly successful English teacher and six case study students in his ninth-grade English class. The study considered conference talk for these different students as it moved across six weeks of writing assignments and occurred under varying instructional conditions typical to many secondary school class settings. The study addresses questions that have implications central both to sociolinguistic scholarship and to pedagogy in the area of secondary school writing instruction:

1. How, in the context of a ninth-grade writing class, do teacher and student accomplish a one-to-one conversation in the service of the student's learning to write?

2. How do variables in the conference context affect the construction of writing conference conversations?

3. How are writing conference conversations accomplished for different students?

By looking closely at one highly successful teacher and that teacher's interactions with his students as they learn to write, this study attempts to understand what constitutes teaching

and learning of writing in one explicitly interactive classroom context; it also sets forth a methodology to help researchers study teacher-student interactions, and gives teachers a way to gain insights into their own classroom interactions in order to help the students they teach. Findings from this study not only support the notion that instructional dialogue is collaborative, shaped by its participants as well as its setting, but illuminate ways in which the secondary school teacher-student writing conference contributes to the highly individual process whereby students learn to write.

What follows is a discussion of the research methods used in the study; I then present the results of the primary analysis, a discourse analysis of conference conversations on which the main findings are based, followed by illustrative case studies which illuminate and extend these findings. Finally, I discuss the significance of this study for research and for practice.

METHODS

Data for this study were collected as part of a larger ethnographic study of the role of response in the acquisition of written language (Freedman, with Greenleaf & Sperling, 1987). I formulated the themes of this study during the course of the earlier study when I participated in examining the teaching and learning of writing in two ninth-grade English classrooms. Ninth-grade classrooms had been chosen because ninth-graders are at a transition time in their schooling and face new challenges to their writing and thinking. For this study one classroom, Mr. Peterson's, became the focus, for in this classroom I had an unusual opportunity for in-depth examination of teacher-student writing conferences within a secondary school English course in which such conferences regularly occurred and were highly valued. My aim in examining these conferences was to draw on the many resources in that classroom—the conferences themselves, Mr. Peterson's own insights, the students' reflections, as well as the students' writing—to get a handle not only on conference talk but on that talk as it was enacted by those participants in that classroom.

At the time of the study, students in Mr. Peterson's ninth-grade English class were in their second semester of ninth grade. For all of them, this semester marked the first time they had Mr. Peterson as their teacher, having come from various other sections of first-semester ninth-grade English. It was spring semester, then, when I observed this classroom—first, during the initial week of the semester as Mr. Peterson introduced the course and set up his program of activities and then again during the final six weeks of the semester when his students began and completed three major essay assignments, their longest and most involving tasks for the course. During the initial week I became familiar with students' names and faces, had an opportunity to read the work they produced, and had an opportunity to study their "cum files"—folders containing grades, anecdotal records, and standardized test scores accumulated over the course of their schooling. It was from this information that the diversity of focal students was identified for study. Data gathered during the other weeks form the basis of analysis and description of collaboration in the teacher-student writing conference.

Setting

Mr. Peterson teaches at a San Francisco public high school which admits students on the basis of middle school or junior high school grades and scores on a standardized test of basic skills (CTBS). While it draws its students from the local community, it also draws students of diverse cultural backgrounds from all over the city. These students are generally motivated academically and plan to go on to college after they graduate. Thus, while there is a diversity of students in this school, most tend to enjoy school and make at least passing grades.

Participants

Mr. Peterson was selected after an intensive search for and observations of Bay Area teachers who were teaching academic writing to ninth-graders and who were recommended by the Bay Area Writing Project and/or by local administrators and teachers as successful teachers of writing. It was believed that successful teachers could offer important classroom activities related to writing not always encountered in the secondary school setting. Mr. Peterson was selected for this study for his incorporation of teacher-student writing conferences as integral to his teaching of writing. A seasoned teacher—at the time of the study he had taught for 23 years—and a seasoned writer—while I was observing in his classroom he was in the process of signing a contract to begin a humorous "survival guide for the grownup [i.e., the teacher] in the classroom"—Mr. Peterson turned out to offer his students the richness of this combined teaching and writing background.

Selecting a subset of students to study followed the rationale that it was important to work with a number that could be followed effectively every day over the course of several weeks. Neither the teacher nor the students were to know we were focusing on anyone until after all classroom observations were complete. The six students who are focal in this study were selected because they offer a diversity essential to providing a comprehensive analysis of writing conference interaction in this classroom. While, as case study students from a descriptive study, they do not "represent" a larger population of students, they make up a fair microcosm of the variety of students in this ninth-grade English course. They offer a range of ability levels as measured by previous-semester grades and by CTBS scores in language arts, suggesting a diversity in predisposition for success in this class; they offer a range of ethnicities approximating the ethnic profile of the classroom, which was composed primarily of Asian-American students, secondarily of Caucasians, with other ethnicities also present; and they offer a female-to-male balance consistent with that in a classroom in which girls outnumbered boys by 21 to 6. Table 1 shows the focal students, providing CTBS scores in language arts and first-semester ninth-grade grades, ethnicity, and gender of each student.

As I came to know these students by their work and by their classroom participation, through interviews and through extensive study of their writing conference transcripts, I learned that they were a diverse group indeed. Gina, participating little in class discussion, nonetheless took a leading role when interacting with her peers. She was used to doing well in school, and she often gave other students the benefit of her experience, offering ideas and helping them with their writing. Barb, quiet in class and in her peer group, a somewhat passive but polite team player ("You go first"), led Mr. Peterson to speculate that he may, at times, have "demanded far more of her than she could bring to her writing." Mr. Peterson did not feel that way about Lisa. Lisa had learned how to succeed in school by pleasing her teachers (in an interview with me she mentioned that she "just did everything he [Mr. Peterson] wanted me to"). Indeed, she participated in class a great deal and Mr. Peterson saw her as someone who always "caught on." Misa, though she talked little in class, was an engaged and persevering writer who regularly initiated conversations with Mr. Peterson about her work. Mr. Peterson remarked that he felt "comfortable" with her, both in the formal setting of the classroom and informally in casual conversation. Donald, jocular comrade to his peers, was almost completely quiet in class. Mr. Peterson felt it was difficult to talk to him, "hard to draw him out." Rhonda, too, talked easily with her peers; unlike Donald, however, she entered with a certain savvy into class discussions, which was striking to watch because she seldom prepared for class. In fact, she produced little written work during the time of the study. Mr. Peterson said that he was concerned about Rhonda all semester, partly because he felt "there was not much communicating going on" between them.

This diversity is more fully demonstrated in the analyses of these students' conferences.

TABLE 1
Scores/Grades, Ethnicity, and Gender of Focal Students

Student	*Scores/Grades*[a]	*Ethnicity*	*Gender*
Gina	A's and B's (no CTBS scores available)	Caucasian	Female
Barb	A's, B's, one C 56 to 93 percentile	Native American	Female
Lisa	A's 81 to 96 percentile	Asian American	Female
Misa	A's, one B 68 to 95 percentile	Asian American	Female
Donald	A's, one B 96 to 99 percentile	Asian American	Male
Rhonda	B's, C's, D's 60 to 92 percentile	Black	Female

[a]Scores = language arts scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS); Grades = first-semester ninth-grade grades

Mr. Peterson's Classroom

Mr. Peterson's classroom was rich in language activity and play. The students, for example, often worked in groups, collaborating on composing group text; they critiqued one another's composing; sometimes they played group games for points—finding in their collective papers the ones with the most vivid verbs, the best transitions, the strongest support for a thesis. Or, alone at their desks they read chapters of *Great Expectations* and, often, worked alone on pieces of writing, producing and revising essays that they would eventually share with Mr. Peterson and with one another. And often, while all this was going on, individual students talked alone with Mr. Peterson—when he stopped by their groups and caught private conversations with individual group members; when he set up two chairs at the front or back of the room and marked, with this set-up, a private space for three or four minutes of teacher-student talk; when he moved from one student's desk to the next, speaking in low tones about their writing. In short, the classroom's primary focus was on the writing activities that filtered, in one way or another, through each class session.

Curriculum Sequence

During the main six-week observation period, students wrote three major papers. The three assignments had in common that they were character studies, asking students to observe, describe, and analyze somebody's character. Conferences were held around three writing tasks, as follows: Beginning with preparatory work in week one, students produced one-paragraph sketches of a teacher-chosen character from Dickens' *Great Expectations* (*GE*), the students within a peer group being assigned the same character (Task 1: *GE* Paragraph). The assignments then built on one another as students, making their own selections about whom to write on, moved from writing about someone they knew (Task 2: Friend Study), to writing about a famous person in the culture (Task 3: Famous Person Study). Students finished the character study sequence by writing about a character in *Great Expectations* whom they chose themselves (since for this task there were no conferences, it is not assigned a number). Each of these writing assignments also included pre-writing activities and a series of rough drafts around which there was peer group response.

Data Collection and Data Sources

I observed Mr. Peterson's ninth-grade English class every day for six weeks, the time it took for the students to cover the three major essay assignments. I observed all teacher-student conferences, along with the other classroom activities, and all of this was recorded on video and audio tape, supplemented by extensive field notes that recorded classroom activities along with observer commentary. I conducted interviews on two separate occasions with Mr. Peterson. Additionally, I conducted two interviews each with the three original focal students, Donald, Lisa, and Rhonda. I conducted no interviews with the other three, for, when I came to select them for the current study, I felt that too much time had elapsed from the end of the observation semester—over a year—for interviews to capture, as they had for the other students, vivid and stable recollections of their conferences with Mr. Peterson and of their other experiences in his class. All student writing was collected as it was being produced, including outlines, peer group response sheets, tests, filled-in dittoes, and the multiple drafts of essays on which the teacher had written comments.

The primary data for this study are the transcripts taken from audio tapes, supplemented by video tapes, of the teacher-student writing conferences for the six focal students. In all, there were 41 such conferences, which were ultimately reduced to a subset of 34, balanced across the six students to include four conferences for Lisa (for whom there were only four altogether) and six for everyone else. Additional data sources are all audio and video tapes of

classroom activities, all field notes, all interviews with Mr. Peterson and the original three focal students, and all focal students' written products.

Data Analysis

As I wanted not only to analyze the construction of conference talk but to understand the construction process as it reflected the students and teacher under study and the classroom in which they worked, I undertook analysis of the conferences inductively, following a methodology that allowed me to utilize all the data sources such that categories describing conference talk, and the generalizations and hypotheses derived on the basis of these categories, might emerge in the course of analysis. The aim too was to extend this process so that generalizations and hypotheses that I generated from the discourse analysis of conference talk could be balanced and refined in building case study portraits of conference interaction. Analysis is thus in two parts: (a) a descriptive quantitative discourse analysis, across cases, of teacher-student writing conferences for the six focal students, based on their conference transcripts, and (b) descriptive case studies within the six individual students across time, informed by all data sources. I was guided in these procedures by the inductive methods used by Corsaro (1985) for studying dyadic interaction in an instructional setting, as well as by Dyson (e.g., 1986, 1987, 1988) and Freedman et al. (1987). In this article, I present the results of the quantitative analysis and, because of space limitations, examples from the illustrative cases of two of the six students, Misa—one of the more interactive—and Donald—the least interactive, chosen here because they contrast maximally to one another in their interactions with Mr. Peterson.

Procedures

I conducted the analysis in a series of phases:

Phase 1: Theoretically Relevant Working Corpus

Using field notes as well as audio and video tapes for the purpose of identifying theoretically relevant (see Corsaro, p. 32) dyadic patterns, I defined conferences to be all exchanges held between the teacher and one student which had as their focus the student's writing and as their outcome a potential modification of the process whereby the student acquires written language. It was this definition that led to the identification of the 41 conferences.

Phase 2: Organization of Audiovisual Data, Reduced Corpus Useful for Further Analysis, Transcription of Reduced Corpus

I catalogued the 41 conferences (after Corsaro, 1985), creating a log which identified for each conference the context in which it was set up by Mr. Peterson, the date it occurred, names of participants, its duration, and the general nature of the conference activity, supplemented by a brief running narrative of the conference. Cataloguing in this way yielded a global picture of the conference activity between Mr. Peterson and the six focal students. As I studied this global picture, three variables emerged as key in reflecting succinctly the overall texture of the conference setting:

(1) The *tasks* around which conferences occurred: (a) Task 1, *GE* Paragraph; (b) Task 2, Friend Study; (c) Task 3, Famous Person Study.

(2) The *conference type*, as reflected in the way conferences were given time and attention: (a) quick, in which Mr. Peterson was interested in covering as many students as possible—ideally, the whole class—in a limited period of time and so

gave each student limited, albeit focused attention (these lasted anywhere from 10 seconds to a little over 2 minutes); (b) prolonged, in which, because Mr. Peterson was not so concerned with "coverage," he and a student became engaged in one or more topics, this engagement serving to lengthen their conversation (these lasted anywhere from a little over 3 minutes to close to 6 minutes); (c) leisurely, in which Mr. Peterson was interested in talking only to one student and spending time doing so, formally scheduling time, often in his office but sometimes in the classroom (these ranged from close to 9 minutes to over 16 minutes).

(3) The range of *purposes* for which conferences occurred: (a) Planning conferences—to plan future text; (b) Written Comment conferences—to clarify the teacher's written comments on students' drafts; (c) Feedback conferences—to give feedback on texts on which there were no written comments; (d) External conferences—to cover concerns tangential—or external—to those above.

After cataloguing, I reduced the full corpus of 41 conferences to 34 in order to even out the number of conferences that I would analyze for each student. I obtained a balanced subset by maintaining for each student those conferences that reflected the overall texture of the conference setting as described above. I then transcribed the conference subset, following a modified version of the transcription conventions developed by Tannen (1984) and Chafe (1982a).

Phase 3: Analysis of Conference Data and Generation of Hypotheses

As suggested by the literature review, conversation is a constructive process reflecting the participants as well as their conversational purposes and setting. Examination of the transcripts led to the identification of theoretically relevant discourse categories, which is to say, categories that captured how speakers participated in building or *structuring* conference discourse as they addressed the issues or *topics* surrounding the student's writing so that the discourse was *functional* to the teaching and learning intended by the writing conference. In other words, I studied the conferences for content as well as for structure as both content and structure had functional relevance. In identifying discourse categories to describe the construction of conference talk, I was guided by the work of Campbell (1986), Green & Wallat (1981), Gumperz (1982), Mehan (1979), and Wells (1981). While this work informed the categories derived for this study, it did not determine them. I identified the following categories, according to which conferences were then coded (see Appendix A for sample of coded conversation).

Topical Concerns

(1) *Topic Initiation.* As the conversation unfolds, both participants have, potentially, the opportunity to raise issues or to change the subject, that is, to initiate a topic. If it is always the teacher who initiates a topic, then the conversation is, by one measure anyway, inclined toward the teacher in a somewhat traditional classroom sense, with the teacher "controlling" the concerns of instruction. If, however, conference conversation is such that these traditional controls are altered, this traditional teacher "weight" reassigned, then students as well as teacher might raise issues or change the subject, that is, student as well as teacher might initiate topics throughout the conversation. A concern raised by the teacher, as in this excerpt from a conference of Misa's—

T: So what are the qualities that she has- she gonna have besides this uh . . . persistence. (M044)

—forces the student to address a topic which the teacher has determined important to discuss (even though the student will contribute substantively to the conversation as only she knows the answer to his question, only she knows the characteristic "qualities" of the person she is writing about). This exchange between teacher and student contrasts with one in which the student determines the topic that will be discussed, as in another of Misa's conferences, in which Misa muses over the convict in *Great Expectations*:

M: Does the discussion of the clothing he wears kind of contribute to the uhm . . the topic sentence? (M023)

(2) *Topic Ownership*. While either teacher or student initiates a topic, it is not necessarily the case that the topic that is raised is tied to or motivated by the initiator's own concern—which is to say, the initiator may not necessarily "own" the topic that he or she initiates. It may be, that is, that the student initiates a topic that is tied to or motivated by the teacher's concern, as when Lisa, in response to a comment that the teacher has written on her paper, initiates the following exchange:

L: I don't understand how I can change my topic sentence. (L031)

While Lisa initiates the exchange that ensues with her expression of concern for how she can change her topic sentence, the topic that she initiates—changing the topic sentence—is motivated by and tied to the teacher's concern that the topic sentence needs changing. Knowing about topic ownership contributes another dimension to understanding the "balance of power" behind discourse topics in these conferences and potentially sheds light on how and why writing concerns and issues that originate with the teacher might come to be appropriated by the student through conference talk.

Structural Concerns

(1) *The Syntagmatic Relationship of Conversational Turns*. Conversations are structured so that Speaker A's turn works in conjunction with Speaker B's in a syntagmatic relationship. How these speaker turns function (e.g., to ask and answer questions, to make and comply with requests) reveals how participants maneuver conversationally with one another to construct discourse as they contribute to such instructional ends as giving and receiving directions, seeking and finding information, offering and accepting one another's ideas. Conferences dominated by different syntagmatic pairs appear to function in contrasting ways. Take, for example, a conference dominated by question-answer pairs, as in the following conference exchange between Mr. Peterson and Donald:

T: (reads D's paper). Ok,
. . . how old is this guy.

D: Hmm.
Fifteen,
I think.=

T: =Ok.
What are you demonstrating that his- all his excuses and stuff.

D: Well,
he criticizes people,
and,

T: Why.

Why do you think he does that. (D043)

This conference appears in marked contrast to one dominated by offer-acceptance pairs in which teacher and student exchange ideas as they offer and accept assertions, as in the following exchange between Mr. Peterson and Gina:

G: Well I pretty much have everything,
except (uc),
but I really don't like my topic sentence.=

T: =I don't either.
Cause I don't-
[
G: (uc) another one.

T: Well—I don't think it's consis- I think the the uh-

G: It doesn't say what I want to say (slight laugh).
I can't think of a word,

T: Yeah "conservative" isn't the word,
right?

G: Yeah,
no,
And neither is "dignified." (slight laugh) (G035)

I designated each conversational turn as either (a) request, (b) compliance, (c) offer, (d) acceptance, (e) question, (f) answer. While other designations of function—e.g., greeting-greeting, ending-ending, warning-response—were possible, those used for this study served to encompass a number of permutations that might under other circumstances need to be more finely designated. For the purposes of this study, for example, most assertions were seen to be offers—offers of information, ideas, or advice. Directives were seen as requests—as when the teacher requests that the student re-write a sentence.

(2) *Initiation of Syntagmatic Unit.* While two speaker turns may work together as a syntagmatic unit (e.g. question-answer), one participant must initiate the unit by asking the question, offering the information, requesting the action. As with topic initiation, as the conversation unfolds, both participants have, potentially, the opportunity to make such initiations. If it is always the teacher who asks the question, makes the request, extends the offer, waiting for the student to respond, then the conversation is inclined toward the teacher, the teacher steering, and in one sense dominating the direction of the talk, much as classroom talk that follows an I-R-E structure (Initiation-Response-Evaluation [see Mehan, 1979]) is steered or dominated by the teacher. As with topic initiation, this "weight" is reassigned when the student initiates a syntagmatic unit. While this feature may appear similar to "topic initiation," it is the case in fact that one participant may initiate a topic that is then sustained by any number of questions and answers, requests and compliances, offers and acceptances, some of which are initiated by the teacher, some by the student, as in the exchange above between Mr. Peterson and Gina, in which Gina initiates the topic that she does not like her topic sentence, and within which Mr. Peterson is seen to initiate one question-answer unit, "Yeah, 'conservative' isn't the word, right?", to which Gina replies, "Yeah, no. And neither is 'dignified'."

(3) *Completion of Syntagmatic Unit.* Whereas any number of syntagmatic units get initiated, they do not all necessarily get completed (a question, for example, may go unanswered). If in fact teacher and student work together to construct the discourse of their conversation, a construction process which leaves syntagmatic units dangling theoretically contrasts with one in which units are complete. Moreover, units might be left in different stages of incompletion. For example, questions can be asked and not answered; or questions can be asked which are not answered immediately but which are expanded by any number of prods and then answered. Take, for example, the following exchange between Mr. Peterson and Donald, in which Mr. Peterson asks a question which he appears not to be able to complete:

T: Ok.
What . . is this the person you wrote on for your uhm-

Donald does not answer the question (yes it is the person, no it isn't), but rather completes the question that Mr. Peterson has begun, filling in the missing word:

D: Anecdote.

Mr. Peterson, embedding a second question, questions Donald's fill-in:

T: Anecdote?

Donald answers Mr. Peterson's embedded question:

D: Yeah.

and Mr. Peterson moves on to another question, dropping the original question:

T: What's the story about.
In your anecdote. (D043)

Mr. Peterson's original question is never explicitly answered. Designating whether or not syntagmatic units are completed, and designating stages of incompletion before completion, then, points toward ways in which teacher and student mutually participate in structuring the discourse.

On the basis of the discourse categories described above, I hypothesized that conferences for different students should vary in patterned ways with respect to (a) topic initiation, (b) topic ownership, (c) the function of conversational turns, (d) the initiation of syntagmatic units, and (e) the completion of syntagmatic units. And, adding a second level of concern, as conversations are theoretically creative events, their construction influenced by participants as they work within different contexts and toward different ends, I also hypothesized that variation should reflect (a) the different tasks around which conferences occur, (b) conference type, and (c) conference purpose.

Coding and Analyzing the Data

I coded all conference transcripts according to the categories specified above so that they could be analyzed by computer. I trained a research assistant to code the conferences independently of my own coding. As a check on the reliability of my coding, without having to duplicate the entirety of my efforts, the research assistant coded independently a representative selection of approximately one-third of the conferences under study, that is, 12 of the 34 conferences. Reliability was determined by finding, for this selection of conferences,

the percentage of codes on which we both agreed. Coding was found to be highly reliable: the two coders reached 95% agreement and discrepancies were discussed so that 100% agreement was reached. SPSS X was used to obtain descriptive frequencies of the discourse features, and crosstabulations showed the frequencies as they were distributed over the variables of interest. The aim here was not to find statistical relationships but to develop quantitative descriptions that would inform interpretations of writing conference behavior.

RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The quantitative analysis of conference discourse leads to two general findings, one concerning the dynamics of the teacher-student conference dyad, the other concerning the influence on these dynamics of the classroom context in which the teacher-student writing conferences occur. First, ***the writing conference provides an occasion for teacher-student collaboration, with conversational ends and instructional ends able to merge in the service of the student's learning to write.*** Specifically, collaboration is reflected in the conversational moves whereby teacher and student initiate, appropriate, and sustain topics related to the student's writing. Second, ***for collaboration to begin to blossom in these conferences, students need to participate in a diversity of conferences***—in this case, across tasks, in conferences of different types and for different purposes. Interaction patterns are seen to vary not only for different students—Lisa, Misa, and Gina take more active roles in constructing conference discourse than do Barb, Donald, and Rhonda—but also for groups of students as the place in the sequence of tasks in which conferences occur varies, as the type of conference varies, or as the purpose of the conference varies. That is, the construction of conference talk is seen to be molded both by the participants involved and by the shifting contexts in which conferences occur. In all this, however, it is still the teacher whom we often see engaging and sustaining the student's participation in writing conference conversation. The analysis, then, asks us to accommodate to the concept of teacher-student collaboration what is seen here to be the teacher's special leadership role. That is, the analysis invites us to question commonly-held assumptions regarding "ideal" conference interaction whereby the teacher, giving up decision-making power to the student, assumes a generally non-directive role.

The following sections summarize the quantitative analysis.

Topical Concerns

Topic Initiation

Table 2 illustrates the percentage of topics arising in these conferences that are initiated by (a) the teacher, and (b) the student.

As the table indicates, the numbers of topics generating these percentages are unevenly distributed among the different students. When reading the table, therefore, it is important to keep in mind that conferences in this class were neither measured nor prescribed events. So, for example, as Lisa had no prolonged or leisurely conferences, it is reasonable that the total number of topics she and Mr. Peterson covered were exceeded considerably by the total number of topics covered by Mr. Peterson and those students who had prolonged and leisurely conferences. As another example, for most students, the number of topics that come up during conferences regarding Mr. Peterson's written comments on their writing is large, for some, especially large; it is reasonable that, as an agenda for these conferences, the teacher's comments triggered moving from topic to topic, and for some students more than others as the frequency and urgency of the comments varied.

TABLE 2
Percentage of Teacher-Initiated and Student-Initiated Topics

	Gina	*Barb*	*Lisa*	*Misa*	*Donald*	*Rhonda*
Overall	(n=9)	(n=20)	(n=5)	(n=42)	(n=29)	(n=12)
Teacher-Initiated	55.6	75.0	40.0	31.0	79.3	66.7
Student-Initiated	44.4	25.0	60.0	69.0	20.7	33.3
By Task						
Task 1	(n=3)	(n=2)	(n=1)	(n=2)	(n=2)	(n=1)
Teacher-Initiated	33.3	50.0	0	0	0	100
Student-Initiated	66.7	50.0	100	100	100	0
Task 2	(n=3)	(n=10)	(n=1)	(n=31)	(n=23)	(n=4)
Teacher-Initiated	66.7	90.0	0	32.3	91.3	100
Student-Initiated	33.3	10.0	100	67.2	8.7	0
Task 3	(n=3)	(n=8)	(n=3)	(n=9)	(n=4)	(n=7)
Teacher-Initiated	66.7	62.5	66.7	33.3	50.0	42.9
Student-Initiated	33.3	37.5	33.3	66.7	50.0	57.2
By Type						
Quick	(n=6)	(n=10)	(n=5)	(n=5)	(n=7)	(n=9)
Teacher-Initiated	50.0	60.0	40.0	0	28.6	66.7
Student-Initiated	50.0	40.0	60.0	100	71.4	33.3
Prolonged	(n=3)	(n=3)	(n=0)	(n=21)	(n=2)	(n=0)
Teacher-Initiated	66.7	100	-	23.8	100	-
Student-Initiated	33.3	0	-	76.2	0	-

(continued)

TABLE 2, continued

Leisurely	(n=0)	(n=7)	(n=0)	(n=16)	(n=20)	(n=3)
Teacher-Initiated	-	85.7	-	50.0	95.0	66.7
Student-Initiated	-	14.3	-	50.0	5.0	33.3
By Purpose						
Plan Future Text	(n=3)	(n=4)	(n=2)	(n=3)	(n=2)	(n=2)
Teacher-Initiated	66.7	75.0	50.0	0	100	50.0
Student-Initiated	33.3	25.0	50.0	100	0	50.0
Discuss Written Comments	(n=4)	(n=12)	(n=3)	(n=37)	(n=25)	(n=6)
Teacher-Initiated	50.0	83.3	33.3	35.1	76.0	83.3
Student-Initiated	50.0	16.7	66.7	64.9	24.0	16.7
Feedback to Text	(n=2)	(n=1)	(n=0)	(n=2)	(n=2)	(n=2)
Teacher-Initiated	50.0	0	-	0	100	0
Student-Initiated	50.0	100	-	100	0	100
External Concerns	(n=0)	(n=3)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=2)
Teacher-Initiated	-	66.7	-	-	-	100
Student-Initiated	-	33.3	-	-	-	0

For four of the students—Gina, Barb, Donald, and Rhonda—the teacher initiates topics most of the time, although in Gina's conferences the percentages of teacher-initiations and student-initiations approach identity. If topic-initiation is seen as an indicator of who directs conference conversations, this "norm" suggests that such direction generally belongs to the teacher. In contrast to this norm, we see how, through topic initiation, Lisa and Misa often accomplish their own conference direction. We see Lisa steering the direction of her conferences, for example, when she begins a conference conversation with the assertion "I don't understand how I can change my topic sentence," and the rest of the conference centers on revising that sentence:

L: I don't understand how I can change my topic sentence.

T: Well.
Ok- you're writing about more than just uh his way of speaking.
Ok?
You know,
You're writing about his whole—,
Let's see.
What are some of the other things you get into here.
Uh—his uh-

L: His personality,
mainly.

T: Well like what' though.
I mean what if (uc) what about his personality.

L: What he says,
to other people?

T: What kinds' of things does he say. (L031)

Misa does much the same thing, often with questions: "Mr. Peterson, does the discussion of the clothing he wears kind of contribute to the topic sentence?" (M023); "Mr. Peterson, what's a synonym of 'ruffian'?" (M023); "Um, ok, what if I do something like a contrasting trait, like she's really a good student?" (M052); "And then like can I give lots of samples for this . . .?":

M: and then like,
can I give . . lots of samples,
for this-,
[. . .]
I mean this is only one . . example.

T: Yes?

M: So I could just . . write more?

T: Sure.
You could just write more.
Ok.
You want to think of another example,
it should . .
[
M: Like-

T: serve a little different purpose.
[. . .]
Even when you're trying to show the same basic kind of thing,
[. . .]
exactly' the same thing as the first one,
there's just no point to giving it.
[. . .]

M: Um,
I thought of giving something about different incidents,

T: Yeah?

M: Like this- different things that she'd do,
like . . show she's mischievous. (M052)

We see, however, that farther along in the series of writing tasks conferences, topic-initiations tend to become more evenly distributed across teacher and student for Lisa and Misa as well as for Donald and Rhonda, suggesting that as conferences move across tasks and time, patterns of dominance tend to be tempered and teacher and student begin to participate more equally, perhaps more collaboratively, in initiating topics to discuss. Purpose of talk, too, tends to influence participation patterns, conferences with different purposes apparently offering participants the opportunity to construct conversations according to the situation at hand, which means, for both teacher and student, breaking expected patterns of topic-initiation and allowing certain "non-initiators" to assume more initiating roles. Barb and Rhonda, for example, initiate 100% of the time in Feedback conferences, and Donald, characteristically a non-initiator, initiates topics at least some of the time in Written Comment conferences. However, as conferences become more leisurely, they tend to include higher percentages of teacher topic-initiations for everyone, suggesting that the teacher—at least as regards raising issues to talk about—tends to control how "spun out" conferences can get.

Topic Ownership

Table 3 shows the percentage of topics that are "owned" by (a) the teacher, (b) the student, and (c) both teacher and student together—which is to say, the percentage of topics that are tied to the teacher's concerns, the student's concerns, or the concerns of both teacher and student together. For all students except Lisa —who, as we saw, is also a "topic-initiating" student—the highest percentage of topics is owned by the teacher, a much smaller percentage is owned by the students, and, when they occur, an even smaller percentage is owned by both together. We sense how the teacher's concern undergirds and motivates conversation when, for example, Mr. Peterson asks for the gist of the anecdote Donald wrote about his friend, leading Donald into an explanation—"Oh, he was in a race and um he fell down and (uc) finish"—that continues over five conversational turns (D043). Or, more dramatically, when Mr. Peterson indicates to Misa that she has to think of different personality traits for the character in her study and leads Misa into a speculation—"Oh, oh, she sometimes gets hyper and chases her grandma around the house"—that develops across 50 conversational turns (M092). In this vein, the teacher's concerns for the students' writing motivate most of these conversations.

Notably, as was true for topic initiation, by third-task conferences, topic-ownership becomes more evenly distributed across teacher and student, indicating that as conferences move across tasks and time, patterns of dominance tend to be tempered, suggesting more active collaboration. And more leisurely conferences include higher percentages of teacher-

TABLE 3
Percentage of Teacher-Owned, Student-Owned, and Both-Owned Topics

	Gina	*Barb*	*Lisa*	*Misa*	*Donald*	*Rhonda*
Overall	(n=9)	(n=20)	(n=5)	(n=42)	(n=29)	(n=12)
Teacher-Owned	66.7	80.0	40.0	61.9	89.7	58.3
Student-Owned	22.2	15.0	60.0	38.1	10.3	25.0
Both-Owned	11.1	5.0	0	0	0	16.7
By Task						
Task 1	(n=3)	(n=2)	(n=1)	(n=2)	(n=2)	(n=1)
Teacher-Owned	33.3	50.0	100	0	100	100
Student-Owned	66.7	0	0	100	0	0
Both-Owned	0	50.0	0	0	0	0
Task 2	(n=3)	(n=10)	(n=1)	(n=31)	(n=23)	(n=4)
Teacher-Owned	100	100	0	64.5	91.3	100
Student-Owned	0	0	100	35.5	8.7	0
Both-Owned	0	0	0	0	0	0
Task 3	(n=3)	(n=8)	(n=3)	(n=9)	(n=4)	(n=7)
Teacher-Owned	66.7	62.5	33.3	66.7	75.0	28.6
Student-Owned	0	37.5	66.7	33.3	25.0	42.9
Both-Owned	33.3	0	0	0	0	28.6
By Type						
Quick	(n=6)	(n=10)	(n=5)	(n=5)	(n=7)	(n=9)
Teacher-Owned	50.0	60.0	40.0	0	71.4	66.7
Student-Owned	33.3	30.0	60.0	100	28.6	33.3
Both-Owned	16.7	10.0	0	0	0	0

(continued)

TABLE 3, continued

Prolonged	(n=3)	(n=3)	(n=0)	(n=21)	(n=2)	(n=0)
Teacher-Owned	100	100	-	85.7	100	-
Student-Owned	0	0	-	14.3	0	-
Both-Owned	0	0	-	0	0	-
Leisurely	(n=0)	(n=7)	(n=0)	(n=16)	(n=20)	(n=3)
Teacher-Owned	-	100	-	50.0	95.0	33.3
Student-Owned	-	0	-	50.0	5.0	0
Both-Owned	-	0	-	0	0	66.7
By Purpose						
Plan Future Text	(n=3)	(n=4)	(n=2)	(n=3)	(n=2)	(n=2)
Teacher-Owned	66.7	75.0	50.0	0	100	50.0
Student-Owned	33.3	25.0	50.0	100	0	50.0
Both-Owned	0	0	0	0	0	0
Discuss Written Comments	(n=4)	(n=12)	(n=3)	(n=37)	(n=25)	(n=6)
Teacher-Owned	75.0	91.7	33.3	70.3	88.0	66.7
Student-Owned	0	0	66.7	29.7	12.0	0
Both-Owned	25.0	8.3	0	0	0	33.3
Feedback to Text	(n=2)	(n=1)	(n=0)	(n=2)	(n=2)	(n=2)
Teacher-Owned	50.0	0	-	0	100	0
Student-Owned	50.0	100	-	100	0	100
Both-Owned	0	0	-	0	0	0
External Concerns	(n=0)	(n=3)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=2)
Teacher-Owned	-	66.7	-	-	-	100
Student-Owned	-	33.3	-	-	-	0
Both-Owned	-	0	-	-	-	0

ownership of topics, again indicating the influence of the teacher in sustained talk. Looking at ownership patterns in relation to topic purpose, we find some telling variation. In particular, Written Comment conferences are fully dominated by teacher-owned and teacher- and student-(both-) owned topics—but of course the teacher's written comments, which are the springboard for these conferences, embody by their very nature the teacher's concerns. In contrast, Feedback conferences are fully dominated (that is, 100% of the time) by student-owned topics for Barb, Misa, and Rhonda. Gina shares topic ownership equally with the teacher in Feedback conferences as, in these cases, apparently without written comments to guide the discussion these students voice their own concerns in order to get response to their writing. As with topic-initiation, then, different purposes appear to open up opportunities to different students to interact with the teacher in covering topics of their own concern, allowing them, in this regard, to steer conference talk.

Structural Concerns

The Syntagmatic Relationships of Conversational Turns

Table 4 illustrates the percentage of syntagmatic units that function as (a) requests and compliances, (b) questions and answers, and (c) offers and acceptances. For four of the six students—Barb, Lisa, Misa, and Donald—the highest percentage is for units functioning as questions and answers, as in the following exchange between Mr. Peterson and Barb over Barb's Friend Study, in which Mr. Peterson tries to get Barb to see the connection between her friend's life and the characteristics of her friend's personality:

T: Ok.
Plays piano,
Which part of her personality is that one.

B: That would be— minister's [i.e. she is the daughter of a minister]

T: Ok.
Gymnastics?

B: That would be Lowell [i.e. she is a student at Lowell High School]

T: Umhm
Church choir,
obvious.
/yes/
Yells at her brothers,
how about that?

B: Well (uc) . . . I don't know.
That would kinda be like both,
I guess. [. . .] (B041)

In contrast, for Gina and Rhonda, the highest percentage is for units functioning as offers and acceptances—which generally means that participants are offering one another information and receiving that information in what might be perceived as typical conversational exchanges, as when Gina says to Mr. Peterson, "There's a a whole description of them [Mr. and Mrs. Hubble] here that um most of them seem to me to be um Pip's opinion," and Mr. Peterson replies by reading back to Gina the *GE* passage that Gina is referring to (G011). For the other students, the second highest percentage is for turns functioning as offers-acceptances. For all six students, the lowest percentage of units function as requests-compliances: prototypical

TABLE 4
Percentage of Request-Compliance, Question-Answer, and Offer-Acceptance Units

	Gina	*Barb*	*Lisa*	*Misa*	*Donald*	*Rhonda*
Overall	(n=64)	(n=113)	(n=36)	(n=214)	(n=119)	(n=77)
Request-Compliance	15.6	21.2	16.7	14.0	13.5	10.4
Question-Answer	28.1	46.0	61.1	59.8	57.1	42.9
Offer-Acceptance	56.3	32.7	22.2	26.2	29.4	46.8
By Task						
Task 1	(n=34)	(n=8)	(n=10)	(n=11)	(n=4)	(n=2)
Request-Compliance	23.5	50.0	20.0	0	0	0
Question-Answer	29.4	50.0	70.0	72.7	100	50.0
Offer-Acceptance	47.1	0	10.0	27.3	0	50.0
Task 2	(n=14)	(n=84)	(n=15)	(n=168)	(n=103)	(n=21)
Request-Compliance	7.1	23.8	13.3	16.1	15.5	14.8
Question-Answer	35.7	41.7	60.0	60.1	52.4	47.6
Offer-Acceptance	57.1	34.5	26.7	23.8	32.0	47.6
Task 3	(n=16)	(n=21)	(n=11)	(n=35)	(n=12)	(n=54)
Request-Compliance	6.3	0	18.2	8.6	0	13.0
Question-Answer	18.8	62.0	54.6	54.3	83.3	40.7
Offer-Acceptance	75.0	38.1	27.3	37.1	16.7	46.3
By Type						
Quick	(n=50)	(n=29)	(n=36)	(n=20)	(n=24)	(n=43)
Request-Compliance	18.0	14.0	16.7	0	4.2	4.7
Question-Answer	26.0	58.6	61.1	75.0	75.0	46.5
Offer-Acceptance	56.0	28.0	22.2	25.0	20.8	48.8

(continued)

TABLE 4, continued

Prolonged	(n=14)	(n=31)	(n=0)	(n=90)	(n=18)	(n=0)
Request-Compliance	7.1	19.4	-	13.3	5.6	-
Question-Answer	35.7	51.6	-	61.1	72.2	-
Offer-Acceptance	57.1	29.0	-	25.6	2.2	-
Leisurely	(n=0)	(n=53)	(n=0)	(n=104)	(n=77)	(n=34)
Request-Compliance	-	26.4	-	17.3	18.2	17.7
Question-Answer	-	35.9	-	55.8	48.1	38.2
Offer-Acceptance	-	37.7	-	26.9	33.8	44.1
By Purpose						
Plan Future Text	(n=25)	(n=9)	(n=19)	(n=9)	(n=6)	(n=15)
Request-Compliance	12.0	0	10.5	0	0	6.7
Question-Answer	16.0	55.6	63.2	77.8	66.7	33.3
Offer-Acceptance	72.0	44.4	26.3	22.2	33.3	60.0
Discuss Written Comments	(n=19)	(n=92)	(n=17)	(n=194)	(n=95)	(n=42)
Request-Compliance	10.5	26.1	23.5	15.5	15.8	14.3
Question-Answer	36.8	42.4	58.8	58.3	53.7	38.1
Offer-Acceptance	52.6	31.5	17.7	26.3	30.5	47.6
Feedback to Text	(n=20)	(n=3)	(n=0)	(n=11)	(n=18)	(n=5)
Request-Compliance	25.0	0	-	0	5.6	0
Question-Answer	35.0	33.3	-	72.7	72.2	80.0
Offer-Acceptance	40.0	66.7	-	27.3	22.2	20.0
External Concerns	(n=0)	(n=9)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=15)
Request-Compliance	-	0	-	-	-	6.7
Question-Answer	-	77.8	-	-	-	53.5
Offer-Acceptance	-	22.2	-	-	-	40.0

"instructional" directives, then, in the form of requests ("Put 'juvenile' in quotes, see" [G011]) happen relatively infrequently in these conferences.

The analysis shows that conversational turns function such that the percentages of requests-compliances, questions-answers, and offers-acceptances pattern in stable ways within students regardless of when in the series of tasks conferences occur, what type they are, or what their purpose may be. These patterns are similar among students as well: for most students, conferences are dominated by question-answer units. Yet leisurely conferences (for those students who have leisurely conferences) appear to subdue this mode of interacting, suggesting that sustained talk is incompatible with a "Twenty Questions" approach to conversation. Leisurely conferences also include a higher percentage of request-compliance units—more direction giving—than conferences without such leisurely bent—perhaps because, with more time and inclination, teacher and student can contextualize requests and directions so that they are meaningful for the student. Request-compliance units also assume higher percentages in Written Comments conferences than they do in conferences with other purposes—suggesting that the teacher's written comments are a springboard for direction-giving in order that students may act on those comments and change their texts, in contrast to conferences with other purposes. Again, when conferences are held for diverse purposes, opportunities are opened up for different ways of constructing talk.

Initiation of Syntagmatic Unit

Table 5 shows the percentages of totaled request-compliance, question-answer, and offer-acceptance units that are (a) teacher-initiated and (b) student-initiated. Across all students, the highest percentage is for units initiated by the teacher. This initiation pattern can be seen in exchanges such as the one between Rhonda and Mr. Peterson in which Mr. Peterson asks a question, gets a partial response from Rhonda, then repeats the question which Rhonda then answers:

T: Do you have a paper today?

R: This is not-=

T: =No no no no.
Do you have a-

R: No I mean to see' you about this.
That's I was supposed to see you today.

Mr. Peterson then initiates an offer-acceptance exchange—

T: But that doesn't mean you're not supposed to do this'.

R: (slight laugh) (R071)

—and the conversation continues with Mr. Peterson's directing the unfolding talk with his questions, requests, and offers. If such initiations are seen as indicators of who directs conference conversations, this pattern suggests that such direction typically belongs to the teacher. Yet the percentages for Misa's conferences veer considerably from the norm, for she initiates units 40% of the time, approximately twice as often as the other students. Thus she determines, almost as much as Mr. Peterson, the way her conversations function—that is, to seek and obtain information, to exchange ideas, to direct action. In this pattern, she echoes her tendency to initiate topics, as seen earlier.

TABLE 5
Percentage of Teacher-Initiated and Student-Initiated Units

	Gina	*Barb*	*Lisa*	*Misa*	*Donald*	*Rhonda*
Overall	(n=64)	(n=113)	(n=36)	(n=214)	(n=119)	(n=77)
Teacher-Initiated	71.9	83.2	77.8	58.5	82.4	72.7
Student-Initiated	28.1	16.8	22.2	40.7	17.7	27.3
By Task						
Task 1	(n=34)	(n=8)	(n=10)	(n=11)	(n=4)	(n=2)
Teacher-Initiated	67.7	62.5	70.0	45.5	50.0	100
Student-Initiated	32.4	37.5	30.0	54.6	50.0	0
Task 2	(n=14)	(n=84)	(n=15)	(n=168)	(n=103)	(n=21)
Teacher-Initiated	85.7	91.7	80.0	59.5	85.4	66.7
Student-Initiated	14.3	8.3	20.0	40.5	14.6	33.3
Task 3	(n=16)	(n=21)	(n=11)	(n=35)	(n=12)	(n=54)
Teacher-Initiated	68.8	57.1	81.8	62.9	66.7	74.0
Student-Initiated	31.3	42.9	18.2	37.1	33.3	25.9
By Type						
Quick	(n=50)	(n=29)	(n=36)	(n=20)	(n=24)	(n=43)
Teacher-Initiated	68.0	58.6	77.8	45.0	58.3	58.1
Student-Initiated	32.0	41.4	22.2	55.0	41.7	41.9
Prolonged	(n=14)	(n=31)	(n=0)	(n=90)	(n=18)	(n=0)
Teacher-Initiated	85.7	96.8	-	61.1	94.4	-
Student-Initiated	14.3	3.2	-	38.9	5.6	-

(continued)

TABLE 5, continued

Leisurely	(n=0)	(n=53)	(n=0)	(n=104)	(n=77)	(n=34)
Teacher-Initiated	-	88.7	-	60.6	87.0	91.0
Student-Initiated	-	11.3	-	39.4	13.0	8.8
By Purpose						
Plan Future Text	(n=25)	(n=9)	(n=19)	(n=9)	(n=6)	(n=15)
Teacher-Initiated	68.0	66.7	79.0	44.4	83.3	53.3
Student-Initiated	32.0	33.3	21.1	55.6	16.7	46.7
Discuss Written Comments	(n=19)	(n=92)	(n=17)	(n=194)	(n=95)	(n=42)
Teacher-Initiated	79.0	89.1	76.5	60.8	80.0	85.7
Student-Initiated	21.1	10.9	23.5	39.2	20.0	14.3
Feedback to Text	(n=20)	(n=3)	(n=0)	(n=11)	(n=18)	(n=5)
Teacher-Initiated	70.0	0	-	45.5	94.4	20.0
Student-Initiated	30.0	100	-	54.6	5.6	80.0
External Concerns	(n=0)	(n=9)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=15)
Teacher-Initiated	-	66.7	-	-	-	73.3
Student-Initiated	-	33.3	-	-	-	26.7

Except for interactions with Misa, however, the teacher takes the lead over the student in determining the structure of conference talk through his questions, offers, and requests, which the student must then answer, accept, and comply with. We see this tendency regardless of where in the series of writing tasks conferences occur and regardless of whether conferences unfold quickly or at leisure. Noting, however, that for all students the percentage of student-initiations is higher in quick conferences than in prolonged and leisurely conferences, we sense again the teacher's role in sustaining conference talk. It is when there is a variety of conference purposes that students appear to have more opportunities to play determining roles in structuring conference conversation. In Feedback conferences, for example, Barb, Misa, and Rhonda all initiate units more than their teacher. Misa does so in Planning conferences. Different students appear to take initiative differently depending on why they are getting together with the teacher.

Completion of Syntagmatic Unit

Table 6 shows the percentage of units (a) that the teacher initiates—in asking questions, making offers, making requests—and that the student completes—in answering the questions, accepting the offers, complying with the requests, and (b) that the student initiates and that the teacher completes. For all students except Lisa, the percentage of student-initiated/teacher-completed units is higher than of teacher-initiated/student-completed units. The numbers suggest that when the teacher talks the student is sometimes not listening or is sometimes not able to reply. Or that when the student talks the teacher has ready responses because he either "knows more" or is more conscientious about interacting. Yet it also happens that the teacher sometimes puts a solitary, teacherly "coda" on conference talk, as when Mr. Peterson summarizes for Gina the writing task ahead and Gina simply listens): "Paul uh Paul Newman sounds pretty good to me. But you will have to- it will take you a little bit of work with the *Reader's Guide*. That's fine" (G085). Notably, in a few cases the student does this too, as when Misa puts a cap on her conversation with Mr. Peterson: "Ok. So I just leave it the way it is" (M023). We remember, too, that analysis also uncovered units that are not immediately completed but eventually completed. Take, for example, the following case, in which teacher and student step in on each other's ideas, as the offer initiated by the teacher is appropriated by the student, the student taking over the offerer's role. Here Mr. Peterson offers information, Gina appropriates the offer, and Mr. Peterson accepts:

T: Well— I don't think it's consis- I think the the uh-

G: It doesn't say what I want to say (slight laugh).
I can't think of a word,

T: Yeah, conservative isn't the word [. . .] (G035)

While initiation-completion patterns, then, suggest the teacher's more vocal participation in conference talk, the mismatch between teacher-initiation and student-completion of units indicates not so much student ineptitude as both participants' enacting an unfolding, protean process. The unpatterned variations which can be seen for different students across tasks and as conference purpose varies, suggest that both teacher and student actively construct the talk in these conferences as unfolding constraints dictate, the discourse individualized such that conventional I-R-E (initiation-response-evaluation) patterns are not followed.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

While different students might be expected to interact differently with the teacher, it is telling that interaction patterns often vary not only for different students but also for groups of students as the place in the sequence of tasks in which conferences occur varies, as the type of

TABLE 6
Percentage of Teacher-Initiated Units Completed by the Student and Student-Initiated Units Completed by the Teacher

	Gina	*Barb*	*Lisa*	*Misa*	*Donald*	*Rhonda*
Overall						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=46)	(n=94)	(n=28)	(n=127)	(n=98)	(n=56)
% Completed by Student	69.6	67.0	82.1	74.0	55.1	71.4
Student-Initiated Units	(n=18)	(n=19)	(n=8)	(n=87)	(n=21)	(n=21)
% Completed by Teacher	94.4	78.9	75.0	92.0	85.7	85.7
By Task						
Task 1						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=23)	(n=5)	(n=7)	(n=5)	(n=2)	(n=2)
% Completed by Student	69.6	40.0	57.1	100	50.0	100
Student-Initiated Units	(n=11)	(n=3)	(n=3)	(n=6)	(n=2)	(n=0)
% Completed by Teacher	90.9	33.3	33.3	83.3	100	-
Task 2						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=12)	(n=77)	(n=12)	(n=100)	(n=88)	(n=14)
% Completed by Student	58.3	67.5	83.3	75.0	53.4	85.7
Student-Initiated Units	(n=2)	(n=7)	(n=3)	(n=68)	(n=15)	(n=7)
% Completed by Teacher	100	85.7	100	91.2	80.0	71.4
Task 3						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=11)	(n=12)	(n=9)	(n=22)	(n=8)	(n=40)
% Completed by Student	81.8	75.0	100	63.6	75.0	65.0
Student-Initiated Units	(n=5)	(n=9)	(n=2)	(n=13)	(n=4)	(n=14)
% Completed by Teacher	80.0	88.9	100	100	100	92.9
By Type						
Quick						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=34)	(n=17)	(n=28)	(n=9)	(n=14)	(n=25)
% Completed by Student	73.5	64.7	82.1	77.8	78.6	92.0
Student-Initiated Units	(n=16)	(n=12)	(n=8)	(n=11)	(n=10)	(n=18)
% Completed by Teacher	87.5	75.0	75.0	81.8	100	83.3

(continued)

TABLE 6, continued

Prolonged						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=12)	(n=30)	(n=0)	(n=55)	(n=17)	(n=0)
% Completed by Student	58.3	73.3	-	72.7	82.4	-
Student-Initiated Units	(n=2)	(n=1)	(n=0)	(n=35)	(n=1)	(n=0)
% Completed by Teacher	100	100	-	97.1	0	-
Leisurely						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=0)	(n=47)	(n=0)	(n=63)	(n=67)	(n=31)
% Completed by Student	-	63.8	-	74.6	43.3	54.8
Student-Initiated Units	(n=0)	(n=6)	(n=0)	(n=41)	(n=10)	(n=3)
% Completed by Teacher	-	83.3	-	90.2	80.0	100
By Purpose						
Plan Future Text						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=17)	(n=6)	(n=15)	(n=4)	(n=5)	(n=8)
% Completed by Student	70.6	83.3	86.7	50.0	60.0	100
Student-Initiated Units	(n=8)	(n=3)	(n=4)	(n=5)	(n=1)	(n=7)
% Completed by teacher	87.5	66.7	100	80.0	100	85.7
Discuss Written Comments						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=15)	(n=82)	(n=13)	(n=118)	(n=76)	(n=36)
% Completed by Student	66.7	65.9	76.9	73.7	48.7	61.1
Student-Initiated Units	(n=4)	(n=10)	(n=4)	(n=76)	(n=19)	(n=6)
% Completed by Teacher	100	70.0	50.0	93.4	89.5	100
Feedback to Text						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=14)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=5)	(n=17)	(n=1)
% Completed by Student	71.4	-	-	100	82.4	100
Student-Initiated Units	(n=6)	(n=3)	(n=0)	(n=6)	(n=1)	(n=4)
% Completed by Teacher	83.3	66.7	-	83.3	0	100
External Concerns						
Teacher-Initiated Units	(n=0)	(n=6)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=11)
% Completed by Student	-	66.7	-	-	-	81.8
Student-Initiated Units	(n=0)	(n=3)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=4)
% Completed by Teacher	-	100	-	-	-	50.0

conference varies, or as the purpose of the conference varies—which is to say, the construction of conference talk is seen to be molded by personal as well as rhetorical constraints, molded, that is, by the players and by the game. Misa, Lisa, and to a large extent Gina, participate actively in determining the content and structure of talk and, in this regard, are active collaborators in conversation with Mr. Peterson. Yet Barb, Rhonda, and Donald have opportunities to participate more actively, to collaborate in accomplishing conversation, when certain rhetorical constraints shift—such as the time available to them to interact or the reason for interacting. While the teacher tends, generally, to steer conference talk, in fact the percentages become less lopsided in favor of either teacher or student directiveness as student and teacher move through the sequence of writing tasks. This change over task and time in the distribution of discourse features suggests at least two things: that as they work together on a succession of tasks, teacher and student become more comfortable together and thus more evenly active in participating in conversation; and that as students gain experience writing and revising across a sequence of writing tasks, they become more familiar with the aims and constraints of conference talk that serves their writing experience. That there is often variation in the construction of conference talk over time and tasks and under different conference conditions suggests most importantly that "conferencing" is a literacy event that is itself a fluctuating and often evolving process.

This process can perhaps best be appreciated by taking a look at how, in specific instances, conferences get played out by teacher and student. Case study portraits also add another dimension to the findings of the quantitative analysis.

TWO CASE STUDIES

Case study descriptions of the six focal students lead to a third, major finding, revealing a dimension to teacher-student interaction important not only to our conception of dyadic discourse but to the adaptation of the classroom to this conception: ***Students and teacher participate on a continuum of collaboration, playing out a flexible collaborative relationship that varies not only from student to student but for the same student at different times.*** At the more highly collaborative end of the continuum are active negotiations between teacher and student of ideas and strategies for writing, reflected in mutual control of both conference topic and structure. At the other end are student-abetted teacher monologues—often in the form of directives—about the student's text or writing strategies. In between, interactions reflect more or less control by both participants. What follows are excerpts from two cases, Misa's and Donald's, illustrating the extremes of the continuum and demonstrating that, even at the less active end of the continuum the instructional dyad supports student as well as teacher involvement.

The conference talk that I present for Misa and Donald occurs during their writing of the Friend Study, the students' first major essay assignment. I focus mainly on the first of these Friend Study conferences. It is helpful to recall that this assignment included a number of drafts, beginning with a one-paragraph anecdote about the person who is the subject of the writing and ending with a full essay into which the anecdote gets incorporated. The first conference for this assignment takes place in the back of the classroom, in two chairs that Mr. Peterson has set up in order to have prolonged conversations with his students—in order, as he says, to talk to each of them. All week he has called students up one by one to discuss the first rough drafts of their anecdotes, on which he has made written comments. Using his comments as a springboard, he has intended to see that students are writing about someone on whom they have enough or "the best" information so that the information might be used to develop their anecdotes into fuller character studies. He is particularly interested in the possibilities that the writing offers for students to develop different sides of their subjects. Developing a rounded characterization is, in fact, of primary interest to Mr. Peterson in this assignment.

Misa

Misa's conferences with Mr. Peterson and the written drafts to which the conferences are addressed reveal that for this student, dialogue with a knowledgeable adult tests and shapes the control and direction that she is in the process of assuming over her own writing. The push and pull, give and take, of conference talk affords Misa the chance to assume authority as a writer as she both creates and seizes opportunities to master the information, skills, and values that inhere in the mature writer's world as that world is represented by the teacher. As, through her conference talk and texts, we see Misa address the Friend Study writing task, we see her exercising control of her writing, enacted in part in the control she reveals in her dialogues with Mr. Peterson.

Misa has four conferences with Mr. Peterson during the writing of her Friend Study. In them, she determines to no small extent the work of the conference talk and is a key player in the dialogue that is meant to result in her development as a writer. The first conference for the Friend Study is typical for her.

For her paper, Misa writes about Winifred, a studious ninth grader and special friend who happens also to be a student in Mr. Peterson's class. The anecdote which is the focus of the first conference (see Appendix B) centers on how Misa's friend Winifred goes about writing her latest World Geography assignment. As the anecdote indicates, Misa sees Winifred as one of those ideal students who actually does things ahead of time: "While her classmates, including me are still pushing our reports till the last possible minute to the due date, she goes on and starts preliminary outlines concerning her project." We hear how Winifred "hurriedly with lightning speed" gets information from the almanac, and produces, within a few days, "detailed and artistic illustrations" so that "little by little, her work is near completion."

This, however, is just one picture of Winifred, so this first conference is devoted to discussing other qualities that Winifred has besides what Mr. Peterson calls "this persistence" that Misa can incorporate in the next draft. Remembering that developing the two-sidedness of a person is a central concern for Mr. Peterson in these first conferences, there is little doubt that Mr. Peterson "owns" the focal issue of this conference, and in fact he initiates this issue almost as soon as Misa sits down with him. But the dialogue provides Misa with the opportunity, in effect, to incorporate his concern. His initial question, "So what are the qualities that she has- she gonna have besides this uh persistence?", elicits a series of questions and answers through which Misa, her voice clearly indicating her enthusiasm about her topic, tells about another Winifred and highlights what in her final paper she will espouse as the "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" of Winifred's personality:

T: So what are the qualities that she has- she gonna have besides this uh . . . persistence.

M: Oh,
oh,
she she she sometimes gets hyper,
and she chases her grandma around the house.

T: Chases her grandma around the house?
Oh.

M: (laughs) With a loaf of bread.

T: A loaf (stutters) of bread?
Is she kidding,

or is she serious.

M: No (laughs) she was just you know- you know-
hyper.
She's just- you know,
uhm joking around.
But her grandma fights back,
you know.
I wouldn't worry about the grandma.
[. . .]
No,
it's just like- you know they were playing . . .

As the conference continues, Mr. Peterson picks up on the information that Misa provides and, in a teacherly mode, outlines the strategies that she needs to follow to create the next draft of her character study: he tells her that she needs to write about the serious side that "everybody knows" about Winifred, and "the other side of her that you [Misa] know about." Even this request, however, while voiced by Mr. Peterson, is a jointly constructed product of the conference talk, as can be seen in a series of exchanges that has Misa and Mr. Peterson jockeying as bearers of information, offerers of strategy, each participant's contribution feeding the other's such that at times they even complete each other's sentences, appropriating the talk and in effect appropriating the ideas being talked about:

(1) T: Well.
So she's- she's very . . serious' uh—,

(2) M: She- she- she looks' serious.

(3) T: Yeah.
She looks' serious,
and on the surface she acts' serious.
if she's doing important stuff.
Right?
[

(4) M: Uh huh.
. . .
She gets her homework done.
I mean I ask her,
Oh are you finished?
Yes I am,
I went- wow'.
(laughs)

(5) T: Ok.=

(6) M: =That's right.
We have mostly mostly all our classes together.

(7) T: Uh huh.
But.
Then she has this other quality of uh- ,=

(8) M: =She has a sense of humor.
/umhm/

That's right.
If- if you didn't know Winifred,
if you just watch her,
you'd think she's real serious.
You'd- you wouldn't think that- you know- =

(9) T: =ok.
Why don't you write about like,
the unknown Winifred.
Right?
Right?
Write- first of all write about what everybody knows about her,
right?

(10) M: Uh huh.
Do something about-

(11) T: Kid who does all her (uc) on time,
and uh,
and gets all high scores and stuff.
/uh huh/
and then write about the other' side of her that you know about.

It seems reasonable to characterize this interaction as a highly collaborative *appropriating exchange*, in which the participants, with one another's help, take turns in "taking over" the talk in order to construct a message. Specifically, Misa picks up on Mr. Peterson's reference to Winifred's being serious (turn 1), taking it a step further by asserting not that she *is* serious, but that she *looks* serious (turn 2). Mr. Peterson takes Misa's assertion further still when he says that "on the surface" Winifred *acts* serious (turn 3). He encourages Misa to think about this "surface" behavior, which she does (turns 4 and 6). He then begins to predicate another idea (turn 7)—that Winifred has "this other quality"—but Misa cuts him off and completes the predication (turn 8): "She has a sense of humor." Mr. Peterson reinforces everything they have discussed thus far in posing a suggestion for how to write about Winifred's two sides (turn 9), and Misa is ready to elaborate on this suggestion (turn 10)—"Uh huh. Do something about- " when Mr. Peterson completes her sentence (turn 11). Appropriation in this sequence is underscored by the substantial number of latched turns belonging to each of the participants. The last statement in the sequence, in which Mr. Peterson suggests that Misa write about "the other side of [Winifred] that you know about," leads to a lengthy, student-dominated *unfolding elaboration* in which Misa, as if launched by the previous interchange into active participation, reveals information about the Winifred that indeed only she knows about, assisted by Mr. Peterson's interjections:

(12) M: Because like- it's it's like- after I know her for awhile,
you know,
and then' I know she has a sense of humor,
about something similar to mine.
Sometimes I- you don't have to go,
into details of how or what's happening,
she just know what's going on.

(13) T: She (knows?),

(14) M: Really.
Yeah.

She's- if I just mention one (uc),
she knows what I'm talking about.
She kind of picks it up.=

(15) T: =Like what.

(16) M: Like- I don't know,
. . it's like- sometimes we pick up little
things (uc).

(17) T: Hm?

(18) M: Sometimes we pick up little things (uc).

(19) T: (uc)

(20) M: (laughs)
So we just mention the word',
or we just give each other a look like,
and then we know' what we're talking about.

In this unfolding of information dominated by Misa, Mr. Peterson's short questions (turns 13 and 15) push Misa to explain the things Winifred "picks up" on when she and Misa are together. While the push does not result in Misa's fully exemplifying the "little things," she does use the opportunity that Mr. Peterson's urgings open up to continue her talk and expand what she had been saying (turns 16, 18, and 20). Notably, all talk of Winifred's being "hyper" has, by the end of the conference, been tempered and subordinated so that, when the conference is over, Misa and Mr. Peterson are focusing on Winifred's humor and her canniness as a friend.

The conference ends with Mr. Peterson offering a kind of summary of what they have been discussing (turns 21 and 23 below), yet Misa characteristically helps to create this summary by inserting her own thoughts (turn 24) and merging them with his:

(21) T: Ok.
So you're gonna write about the way she appeared-,
the main thing is you gotta write about somehow the way she appears',
let's say to me,
as teacher,

(22) M: Uh huh.

(23) T: and- and the way she is when you're (with her?).

(24) M: Yeah,
like when we're with friends /umhm/ and stuff like that. (M044)

In fact Misa does write about these two sides of Winifred, and produces Draft #2 (see Appendix C). In this draft,Misa begins with her anecdote from Draft #1 about Winifred's being a serious student, then adds to this account a long section on Winifred's "other side," the humorous side seen by family and friends. That Winifred is "hyper," the issue on which Misa's conference talk initially centers, is, as it comes to be in the conference, a subordinate issue in the paper, that quality encapsulated as "mischievious behavior," a trait which Misa uses to exemplify Winifred's sense of humor. The idea of Winifred's intuitive picking up on

things is dropped in this paper, much as it had been in the conference, the paper ending with the more general assertion that Winifred "is cheerful and causes joy to her family and friends."

Donald

While Donald is talkative with his peers, his input into his conference conversations with Mr. Peterson is minimal, and in this his conferences stand in stark contrast to Misa's. Dialogue often seems forced as Mr. Peterson coaxes words and ideas from his quiet interlocutor. In an interview, Mr. Peterson likened talking to Donald to pulling teeth. Indeed, Donald's view of conferences is that they can be occasions for teacher, over student, input. "Conferences," he declared in his first interview with me, are "somewhat helpful because, like, . . . if you don't have an idea of what you're writing he [Mr. Peterson] might give you one." Yet, as his conferences reveal, while Donald is a relatively passive interlocutor, it is this very characteristic which creates conversational opportunities for him to get from Mr. Peterson the direction that will influence his writing. There are also times when his contributions to conference conversation are such that he shapes that direction himself.

For his character study of a friend, Donald writes about Chuck, a whiny, defensive, critical kid for whom Donald clearly has no use. Whereas Misa has four conferences with Mr. Peterson during the writing of this character study, Donald has three. There is little resemblance between Donald's conferences and Misa's. Behind the push and pull in these conferences are the teacher's muscles, seldom the student's.

In the first conference that Donald has for his Friend Study, topics are initiated by Mr. Peterson, topics are owned by Mr. Peterson, and turn structure is determined by him as well, as he tries to incorporate Donald's input as the talk unfolds:

(1) T: (reads D's anecdote) Ok,
that's good.
How old is this guy.
He's uh-,

(2) D: Hmm.
Fifteen,
I think.=

(3) T: =Ok.
What (uc) are you demonstrating that his- all his excuses and stuff.

(4) D: Well,
he criticizes people,
and,

(5) T: Why.
Why do you think he does that.

(6) D: Well,
he doesn't want to be um criticized,
so he criticizes them first.
So,

(7) T: Um hm.
Does that work?
Or (uc) criticizing them?

(8) D: Well,
maybe they do it behind his back,
so he can't hear it.

(9) T: Right.
Is he- is he anyone to be afraid of?
Is he tough?

(10) D: Well—
I wouldn't say (uc).

(11) T: No.
Right.
Uhm,
ok.
So.
Um,
Ok- he's got- on the one hand,
he (stutters) doesn't accept any feelings in himself.
Right,
he makes up all these excuses.
Right?

(12) D: Umhm.

(13) T: On the other hand,
he . . he's quick to criticize other people.

(14) D: Yeah.
Right.

Mr. Peterson begins this segment of talk by asking Donald a closed-ended question (turn 1), which Donald answers (turn 2). Mr. Peterson then asks a series of questions (turns 3, 5, and 7), each of which seeks—but does not receive—discursive or embellished answers. Instead each receives an answer imparting minimal information (turns 4, 6, and 8). We can see that Mr. Peterson's turns 3, 5, and 7 build on one another, each question asking for expansion of the previous answer. Notably, Donald's turns 4 and 6 each end with what might be interpreted as his intentions to say more: "Well, he criticizes people, *and*,"; "Well, he doesn't want to be um criticized, so he criticizes them first. *So*,". Yet, listening to tapes of this exchange, one hears the "and" and "so" trail off at the end of each of these turns, the intonation serving not to conjoin further information but to signal Mr. Peterson to step in and begin his turns. Thus the series of questions from Mr. Peterson apparently unfolds as it does because Mr. Peterson must follow up each question with another to draw out more embellishment from Donald. In turn 9, Mr. Peterson then initiates a new line of questioning, which Donald responds to minimally (turn 10). Apparently aware that nothing more is forthcoming, Mr. Peterson takes the information generated in the previous turns and summarizes it in such a way as to add a new insight into Chuck's personality (turns 11 and 13). In this segment of talk, it is Mr. Peterson who does the work of utilizing the information that Donald supplies. The conversation lasts for 13 more turns, in which Mr. Peterson asks questions and Donald provides brief answers:

T: How do you think he got like that.

D: I don't know,

Uh—,
hanging around the wrong people,
[. . .]

T: Is he a friend of yours?

D: Well I know him,
yeah.

Mr. Peterson ends the conversation, again pulling together the information generated by their talk, and, finally, issuing a directive for how Donald should proceed with his character study:

T: Well,
Ok- I think we've got . . two parts to work with then.
His uh,
his uh—,
. . excessive criticism of other people,
and excessive defense of himself.
[. . .]
Try to think up stories in this both- more stories in both these cases.
Excuses,
and criticism of other people.
Ok?
Yeah. (D043)

The character study that this conference anticipates (see Appendix D) treats the issue of Chuck's excuse-making at length, providing a number of examples, a number of stories. However, the concomitant notion that Chuck criticizes others is never raised in this character study. But as the conference talk indicates, while the notion that Chuck is excessively critical is first voiced by Donald as a way of answering Mr. Peterson's question, it is Mr. Peterson who adopts and nurtures the notion. The conference talk does not indicate that Donald ever comes to own the idea.

As the quantitative analysis showed, dialogic patterns are not fixed, and different conferences open up opportunities for patterns to shift. By the second conference for this task, there are times when Donald's participation appears to contribute more substantively to conference interaction. Not surprisingly, however, the process is laborious, Donald's contributions to the conference conversation virtually extracted from him. At one point, for example, as Mr. Peterson is reading through Donald's character study, he comes to this passage:

> If you ask Chuck a question and he quickly answers confidently, you expect he knows what he's talking about. If you later found out that the answer is incorrect, Chuck will not apologize for misleading you and come up with an excuse such as you mumbled the question and Chuck not hearing it, Chuck misunderstanding the question, etc. If you persist in telling Chuck he is wrong, he will just get mad at you for implying that he was wrong and stare at you with an evil-looking sneer.

Mr. Peterson focuses on the statement, "If you later found out that the answer is incorrect, Chuck will not apologize for misleading you and come up with an excuse such as you mumbled the question . . . ." He attempts to elicit from Donald other kinds of excuses that Chuck might come up with, other kinds of behaviors that Chuck would exhibit under the circumstances. We see him coaxing ideas from Donald by supplying the frames and hints that

will ease Donald's accessing them, using Donald's contributions to encapsulate the substance that Donald might use in revising his essay:

T: He- ok- he'll make- he'll (stutters) will make an excuse,
right?
He'll tell you you mumbled the question,
or what else might he tell you.

D: (silence)

T: Is that the only excuse he ever gives',
or is there something else like it.
[
D: (mumbles back?)

T: (utters a laugh, as if in despair)
Ok,
suppose- suppose you didn't' mum- clearly did not mumble the question,
you said it very loudly.
What would he-

D: (silence)

T: He wouldn't have any- he wouldn't say anything then?

D: I guess he would walk away.

We see how Mr. Peterson works with Donald's silences and recasts and expands this question—"Is that the only excuse he ever gives? Or is there something else like it?"; "Suppose you didn't mumble the question, you said it very loudly, what would he-"—until Donald provides an answer. In the ensuing talk, Mr. Peterson picks up on the answer, using it as a springboard to elicit some embellishment from Donald. Donald then provides the embellishment with uncharacteristic flair, and Mr. Peterson, his words tumbling out in a succession of excited approbations, is explicitly joyful:

T: Oh he'd just walk away,

D: (putting on Chuck's voice) He'd say aww— forget it.

T: All right- all right- ok- ok.
good good.
All right,

Mr. Peterson ends the discussion of this topic, encapsulating the talk by composing an aesthetically pleasing rendition of Donald's account:

T: Say you mumbled the question,
he might say forget it and walk away but he would never' . .
admit he was wrong. (D091)

The above exchange enacts the *accretion of teacher maneuvers* that we saw instances of earlier, Mr. Peterson carrying out what he has anticipated to be a difficult conversation and Donald apparently accepting the opportunity this conversation offers for Mr. Peterson to supply him with information to use in his writing (remember his comment that conferences are

helpful to him because "like if you don't have an idea of what you're writing, he [Mr. Peterson] might give you one"). Yet we have an indication, too, that, within this pattern of teacher-dominated talk, Donald chooses to make some substantive contribution himself, even though by most measures that contribution would be deemed minimal. Indeed, the talk has elicited from him scenarios about Chuck that yield material for Mr. Peterson to help him shape in ensuing text.

CASE STUDIES: SUMMARY

While students can be divided along dichotomous lines as "initiators" or "non-initiators," "active participants" or "inactive participants"—and by extension said to be "collaborative" or "non-collaborative"—in their conference interactions with Mr. Peterson, these case narratives exemplify how, both for more and less active participants, one-to-one conversation still occasions co-laboring—although, as the discourse patterns exemplify, in qualitatively different ways. Misa's *appropriating exchanges* illustrate how she and Mr. Peterson, with one another's help, take turns in "taking over" the talk in order to construct messages. Her *unfolding elaborations* reflect her own steady construction of messages assisted by Mr. Peterson's timely interjections. In contrast, in Donald's conversations, the *accretion of teacher maneuvers* illustrates how Mr. Peterson virtually instigates Donald's participation in conference talk, as, even in his silences Donald helps shape and direct Mr. Peterson's input.

DISCUSSION

The teacher-student writing conference is a context in which conversational ends often merge with instructional ends. That is, the mutual raising of issues relevant to the teaching and learning of writing and the sustaining of these issues over the unfolding seconds and minutes of conference conversation—strategic conversational moves—in fact instantiate collaborative teaching and learning. When Mr. Peterson talks with the six students under study as they interact in the writing conference dyad, what happens, then, to greater or lesser degrees, is collaboration in the service of the student's learning to write. However, it appears in large measure to be the multiplicity of dyadic opportunities in this classroom that feeds the collaborative effort. What emerges from this multiplicity is a concept that holds both theoretical and practical importance, the concept of collaboration in these writing conferences as an ever-shifting "methodology-in-process," reflecting the shifting shapes of conversation wrought by shifting rhetorical constraints.

Thus there is no fixed "portrait" of collaboration. Rather, collaboration can be thought of as existing on a continuum. At the more highly collaborative end of the continuum are active negotiations between teacher and student of ideas and strategies for writing, reflected in mutual control of both conference topic and structure. At the other end, students tacitly urge the conversational flow, in effect buying the teacher's input—even if unwittingly—with minimal verbal contributions of their own.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study, in beginning to uncover the elements of one-to-one teaching and learning among secondary school students and their teacher, expands our understanding of the social forces behind the acquisition of written language, offering a look at learning situated in the classroom. In the protean nature of these conversations, in their taking shape as a result of both the participants involved and the shifting rhetorical constraints which impinge on their interactions, we witness the social complexity of an important mode of individualized instruction. The teacher-student writing conference in this classroom is seen as a context embodying the social construction of written language acquisition, a context in which the student comes to "inherit" the conventions of written language through bilateral pursuit of those

conventions with a more able adult. The writing conference in this secondary school classroom is an occasion for negotiation and decision-making, a context for dialogic learning to blossom. Because it is a context that can be jointly controlled by both participants, it is what John-Steiner (1987) refers to as an opportunity for the "powerful joining of learner to other."

This study provides insights, not recipes, about how teacher-student writing conferences might work in the secondary school classroom. Future research needs to address a number of questions not encompassed in the scope of this study, as well as issues that this study implicitly raises. First of all, we need know more about the relationship between dialogue and text. Is there a way to trace both direct and indirect relationships between what students discuss with the teacher in conversation and what students write in fulfillment of an assignment for that teacher? What cognitive steps constitute the bridge from dialogue to text production? What other classroom interactions constrain teacher-student dialogue and affect student writing? What is the relationship between what gets accomplished in the writing conference and what is engendered by the teacher's written comments on a student's paper? between what gets accomplished in the writing conference and what is engendered in class discussion? between what gets accomplished in the writing conference and what is engendered in student peer talk?

We also need to know how the teacher-student writing conference unfolds for different students and different teachers. How does it unfold for high school students, for example, who reflect more average than above average school achievement? Even the students in this study, coming from the same classroom, show different profiles, but a radically different group could contribute much to notions of collaboration in the writing conference dyad. Mr. Peterson is recognized in his profession as a successful teacher of writing. He is a writer himself. He is also a Bay Area Writing Project teacher consultant and his teaching reflects the philosophy of the National Writing Project. How does the writing conference dialogue unfold for teachers who bring different professional backgrounds to the teaching of writing? Must writing conferences always exist in such large numbers for each student and take place for the variety of reasons and under the variety of circumstances that they do in Mr. Peterson's class in order for teacher and student to collaborate effectively on the student's learning to write? This last is an important question for secondary school teachers, whose other responsibilities will not diminish if they also integrate writing conferences into their curriculum. Finally, this study of teacher-student collaboration invites within-classroom comparisons to student-student collaboration, another important means of interaction. Such comparisons would allow the examination of such issues as how, in shifting academic contexts, decision-making about writing and writing processes can be negotiated, or how information, skills, and values regarding written language can be transmitted.

Mr. Peterson's classroom made it clear that the task of orchestrating writing conferences in the secondary school curriculum is far from impossible. His classroom also made it clear that when writing conferences become part of the process of teaching and learning writing, in spite of the conversations that feel difficult, that feel like pulling teeth, they can be an essential training ground in the discourse that feeds written language development. To paraphrase a comment that Mr. Peterson made in our last interview, writing conferences may be one of the best resources we have to begin "really communicating" with a student about writing.

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Appendix A
Sample of Coded Conversation[a]

 # 1 {Topic of paper} TT

%

T: What's your- (uc) where's your- let's see,
who are you writing on?
oh you're writing on uh-,
Q

M: Winifred.
A

T: That's right.
Ak

%

T: Are you gonna stay with that?
Q

M: Yeah.
A

 # 2 {Ascertaining facts & details on topic} TT

%

T: So what are the qualities that she has- she gonna have
besides this uh . . . persistence.
Q 1X

M: Oh,
oh,
she she she sometimes gets hyper,
and she chases her grandma around the house.
A

%

T: Chases her grandma around the house?
Oh.
Q 2X

M: (laughs) With a loaf of bread.
A

%

T: A loaf (stutters) of bread?
Is she kidding,
or is she serious.
Q 3X

M: No (laughs) she was just you know- you know- hyper.
She's just- you know,
uhm joking around.
A

%

But her grandma fights back,

you know.
I wouldn't worry about the grandma.
OF

T: I'm not worried about the grandma.
AC

%
If the grandma gets hit with a loaf of bread,
it's not going to hurt her that much.
(laughs)
OF

M: No,
it's just like- you know they were playing so,
AC

T: I see.
Ak

%
T: . . .
Well.
So she's- she's very . . serious' uh--,
OF

M: She- she- she looks' serious.
OFe,RV

T: Yeah.
She looks' serious,
and on the surface she acts' serious.
(if she?) (uc) important stuff.
Right?
ACe OF,RV OF,XP Qe

[a]Key to coding symbols:

At topic level:

marks topic shift (numbered throughout the conference chronologically; thus, **#1, #2,** etc.)

{ } encloses brief summary of the topic

TT, TS indicates topic ownership: tied to teacher, tied to student

At level of syntagmatic unit:

% marks shift of syntagmatic unit

At level of conversational turn:

Q=question; **A**=answer; **OF**=offer; **AC**=acceptance; **RQ**=request; **CO**=compliance; **Ak**=Parenthet acknowledgement (similar to the "Evaluation" segment of an Initiation-Response-Evaluation unit)

e indicates a new syntagmatic unit is being embedded within an already existing syntagmatic unit

RV indicates that the conversational turn revises the message of a previous turn

XP indicates that the conversational turn explands the message of a previous turn

1X, 2X, 3X,...nX indicates a noticeable semantic build-up from the previous syntagmatic unit

Appendix B

ok
Try these again but with more information about the specific report she is working on. Mrs. Winkler - Judges Livilia

My friend [redacted] is a well organize inaivual.

In a month before our regional geographic term papers for World Geography 2 were due, [redacted] has already discover a topic which sparks off her interest, World Civilization

While her classmates including me, are still gnashing our nezorts till the last possible minute to the due date, she proceeds goes on and starts preliminary outlines concerning her project.

-I remember She She charging in the library's catalogs, searching for some materials on her topic when Mr. Winkler, our geography teacher, gave us the day as study period. After she finds those the books she needs, my friend then borrows are almanac from the librarian desk and hurriedly. Do you need all with lightning speed jotties down the information she finds. A few days later, I ask her how she is

information notes

What?

Describe them.

doing in the term papers and [redacted] shows me her detailed and artistic illustrations. Little by little her work is more completetion. Finally, [redacted]'s neatly typed and organized term papers are finished with more than a week before due date. [redacted] is the only friend I know who organizes her time so well that she never worries about dead lines because she always make time to spare

double-space

to plan

Finally [redacted] is neatly typed and organized papers

always with

How many pages to the Lodge.

Excellent! Make these changes before I access your grade

Appendix C

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

"Hey [redacted]! Hey [redacted] wait up!" I yell at the top of my lungs but she still didn't hear me. So I hasten my walking ~~pace~~ increase to a semi-jog, hoping I'd catch up to her without creating any permanent damage to my out of shape body. I can recognize her anywhere by the way she hunches her shoulders forward a little bit while she is walking. Furthermore, her dark blue Todd 1 sweat jacket and Levis are inseparable. Huffing and puffing, I finally manage to catch up to her.

"Hi [redacted], do you know I have been chasing after you for a couple of blocks already?!" I inform her.

"Oh really?" she replies with the lift of her brows. "I always thought you like following strangers for the fun of it," she says with a devilish smirk on her lips, her laughing eyes peering at me behind the gold-rimmed spectacles. I ignore her remark and ask, "Did you start on your report yet?" Before she replies I already know the answer, "Yeah, I finished some illustrations and borrowed some books from the library already." We arrive at school and part ways to our lockers.

At school, [redacted] is the model student who never cram for tests or completes projects at the last moment. She organizes her time very well. A month before our regional geographic term papers for world Geography II were due, Winsome has already discover a topic which sparks off her interest: Ontario, Canada. While her classmates including me, are still pushing our reports

till the last possible minute to the due date, she proceeds on her preliminary outlines.

Then Mr. Tobler, our geography teacher, gave us the day as study period, [redacted] charges to the library's catalogues, hunting for some materials on her topic. After she finds the books she needs, my friend then borrows an almanac from the librarian desk and copies down the information. what information?

A few days later, I ask her how she is doing on the term paper and [redacted] shows me her detailed and artistic illustrations. My favorite illustrations are the pencil drawings she copied from the majestic "Canadian National Tower" and the modern, space-age looking "City Hall of Toronto." Her sketches show every geometric angle and curve impeccably to the last iota. In addition, she cleverly uses snow white paper to contrast the illustrations which appear even more sharp and eye-catching.

Little by little her work is near completion. Finally, [redacted]'s neatly double-spaced, typed and organized papers along with colorful maps, and vivid, picturesque illustrations are all finished more than a week before due date.

I'm the complete opposite of her when it comes to doing school work on time. I usually, if not most of the time cram at the last second. The day she finishes her term paper is the day I officially begin collecting information for my report.

If you only believe in [redacted]'s serious and studious attitude she adapts in class then you are fooled. Hidden within her is a sense of humor, and mischievous behavior which she reveals only to family members and friends. The victims most exposed to

her moods and pranks are her grandmother, brother, and sometimes Lily and me. Two weeks ago, [redacted] told me about some incidents which happened to her unfortunate grandma during one of her hyperactive disposition ~~over the weekend~~. In order to eliminate her pent-up energy, she snaps up her mom's suggestion and vacuums the whole house. ~~Even then~~ [redacted] can turn her vacuum cleaner into a lethal weapon against anyone who crosses her path. She maneuvers the vacuum cleaner into a steamroller that is ready to flatten anyone to the likeness of a pancake. Her first prey is grandma on whom [redacted] shows no mercy during her state of temperament and pursues persistently behind the victim. [redacted]'s poor grandma must dodge and avoid various furniture pieces which has momentarily became an obstacle course for her to evade the granddaughter who suddenly loses her sanity and ~~became a~~ replica of "Dennis the Menace". At last, grandma is quick enough to escape the threat of being level down to the thickness of a piece of paper.

After nearly wearing down the wall to wall carpeting at her own home, she still hasn't calm down enough yet. Acting on inspiration, she races into the well-equipted kitchen and seeks for a banana, to utilize as her make-believe automatic gun. Disappointingly she fails to find a banana, even after she turns the kitchen upside down which now resembles a disaster area caused by a dozen whirling twisters. Winsome then sits dejectedly brooding over her bad luck until she spots the "Francisco Extra Sour Dough French Bread" lying on the counter among the "Ho Ho's", "Wilatrick" white bread, and other pastries. So instead of using a English muffins

get the Kitchen closer to the cheese that ...takes it.

banana, she makes use of the French bread as her [redacted] and sneak attack her grandma to make up for her grandmother's earlier fortunes. Good old grandma is not totally helpless because she too grabs a French bread as her sword and fights back vigorously. For a while [redacted] was winning but her grandma makes a strong come back, and forcing [redacted] to retreat a few steps. The two of them now engage in a heart-stopping climax where every step or move move is vital to winning this duel. Finally, the robust old lady won by using her fancy footwork.

[redacted] point of view of [redacted] is that she possesses the split personalities of Dr. Jeckle and Mr. Hyde. In the confines of a classroom and the presence of a teacher, she is the silent and invisible pupil who does her work perfectly. While on the other hand, she is like a brilliant candle that draws moths to her and many times the life of the party when she is with friends. [redacted] is also like John Jermick in "Great Expectations" by Charles Dickens where she separates her rave mask and party mask during different situations she is in. I don't categorize her split personalities trait as a fault but on the contary an asset that makes her an interesting friend. In addition, like her name as define, she is cheerful and causes joy to her family and friends.

$$(x^2+px+c)^{\frac{1}{n}}$$
$$x^2+\frac{px}{a}=\frac{-c}{a}$$
$$x^2+\frac{px}{a}+\frac{p^2}{4a^2}=\frac{-c}{a}+\frac{b^2}{4a^2}$$
$$\left(x+\frac{b}{2a}\right)^2=\frac{-4ac+b^2}{4a^2}$$
$$x+\frac{b}{2a}=\frac{\pm\sqrt{b^2-4ac}}{2a}$$
$$x=\frac{\sqrt{b^2-4ac}}{2a}$$
$$x=-b\pm\sqrt{b^2-4ac}$$

"Excuses, excuses," someone might say to Chuck who constantly makes excuses to get out of situations or not be blamed for something. Chuck stands about five feet tall and is a bony ninety pounds. He has short black hair combed to one side and usually wears sweaters or a thin jacket with corduroy pants or blue jeans. He has an extremely dark tan that any sun bather would envy. He walks with an overconfident stride and sometimes talks sarcastically with a devilish grin on his face.

Chuck is a person who makes excuses for everything. For instance if you let him play with your portable video game and he loses it, you would expect him to compensate you for it. Chuck, though, would probably make up an excuse like a big bully came over and stole it away, when actually maybe Chuck busted the game and hid it so you won't find out and get mad at him. If you play a game, say checkers, with him and he loses, he will say, "Aw, you got lucky." Instead of smiling and challenging you to another game. Chuck probably wouldn't want to play you and say something like, "Why

better, I'll probably win anyway so we might as well not play," even though he is just saying it because he is afraid he'll lose. If he is playing basketball and drops a throw that Old Bill Hubbard would've caught, he would probably say that it is a lousy throw, his stick is bad, etc., instead of admitting his basketball skills are not exactly like that of Steve Harvey's. If he is playing basketball and his shot goes two feet above the backboard, his excuse might be the ball slipped out of his hand, someone fouled him even though probably no one even touched him, etc. These "etc" just get in the way.

Chuck's constant excuse-making causes a lot of people to become disenchanted with Chuck. For example, when he was running in a race, he complained that he was pushed. Even though Chuck had no chance of winning, he just used it to have an excuse for not winning the race. If someone told him that he had no chance of winning anyway, Chuck would snap back and say "I would have whipped them if I hadn't got shoved." People would then think Chuck

~~as feeling himself lost his ability and would not think very highly~~

of Chuck. Another example of Chuck making an excuse is, you won't

believe it, when he cries! I'm not talking about in kindergarten, I'm

talking about in high or 7th grade. He even did it on several occasions.

Chuck was asked a question by a teacher and Chuck didn't know the

answer and the teacher insisted Chuck on telling him the answer.,

Chuck would do his best action to avoid answering the question. The

teacher naturally would be shocked but would be stop asking Chuck to

answer the question. Of course, Chuck's fellow classmates highly disapprove

of this "technique" and would think of Chuck as very immature.

Chuck makes excuses because he is afraid to admit he is wrong.

if he does or is even close to something, he gets really upset. even

such as he cannot tolerate the hardest, he wanted to let someone else

win, instead of admitting that his running ability was not good

enough for even if you ask Chuck a question and he quickly answers

You need an example in these four paragraphs

later found out that the answer is incorrect, Chuck will not apologize for misleading you and come up with an excuse such as you misheard the question and Chuck not hearing it, Chuck misunderstanding the question etc. If you persist in telling Chuck he is wrong, he will just get mad at you for implying that he was wrong and stare at you with an ~~evil-looking~~ answer.

Chuck is not a bad guy. He just has a problem of making too many excuses and not facing facts. I have a feeling that Chuck will be able to overcome this problem in the future. Maybe as he matures, he will learn responsibility and not make as many excuses. If he can overcome this problem, I am sure that Chuck and the people who know him will be happier.

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